

# THEATER MISSILE DEFENSE IN ASIA

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THEATER MISSILE DEFENSE IN ASIADY. David M. Finkelstein \*
ABSTRACT

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The overarching argument in the paper is that the controversy over the future introduction of US TMD systems in the Asia-Pacific region is much more a function of the political baggage associated with these systems than their actual operational implications; specifically the issue of whether and to whom these systems might be transferred. Clearly this is the case in the context of the potential transfer of TMD to Taiwas and, to a lesser extent, to Japan. As the chief opponent of US TMD Beiging worries less about the ability of the systems to neutralize their missile forces than over their assessment that TMD transfer to Taiwas will incorpably lead to what they fear will result in "military relations creep" between Washington and Taipei.
A second major argument is that the original impetus for the US to develop TMD systems was ggaf function of developments in Asia. To the contrary, it began with a real and demonstrated threat to US forces by the proliferation gand actual use of theater ballistic missiles against US forces in other parts of the world. Irags use of SCUD missiles during the Cult War, and the fact that the single greatest loss of American life during that were was the result of an Irag ISCUD was a watershed event for the US TMD program. Nevertheless, TMD became "an Asian issue" because Chinese and North Korean missile programs and launches justified the original decisions to move forward with the program after the fact.

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Note that the control of the past decade 18D as a minus y system wan proxy implications are reasonable to the CLS. Covernment and contractor cricies. But unit recently TMD had not really been an issue in the public oy here in the U.S. nor has it been the subject of wider public attention or debate such as National Missile Defense has become by now. This, I would assert, is explained by at least U.S. Covernment and contractor cricies. But unit recently TMD by and not really been an issue in the public oy here in the U.S. nor has it been the subject of wider public attention or debate such as National Missile Defense that the properties of the public of

tal employment of theater ballistic missiles around the world.

now, many people have forgotten about the "War of the Cities" between Teheran and Baghdad, the SCUDs fired by Libya in 1986, the Iranian missile problem faced by the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf in the late 1980s, or the hundreds of Soviet SCUDs that were deployed in hanistan from 1988 to 1991. And clearly, if there was no real operational impetus for developing TMD prior to 1991 there certainly was one as a result of the Gulf War. According to BMDO data, during that conflict Iraq fired some 90 SCUDs against Saudi Arabia and a few age leas well.

### TODAY TMD IS ALSO ABOUT ASIA

TODAY TND IS ÁLSO ABOÚT ASIA
While the impetus behind TND was not originally driven by Asian security scenarios TMD has today become almost synonymous with Asia within the circles of savants. It may also be worthwhile, then, to review some basics about why or how that happened.
Two relatively recent events, I would assert, made Asia a lightening rod for U.S. TMD programs. North Korea's launching of a Taepodong missile in August 1998 and the two instances of Chinese missile firings in the Taiwan Strait in 1995 and 1996.
First, North Korea. Even if one argues after the fact that the 19PKT Teepodong launch in August 1998 was merely part of a satellite program, and not part of an offensive missile program, the point remains that the launch demonstrated a capability on the part of an often dangerously unspredictable regime. But most unnerving was the fact that the trajective of the projectile was dangerously close to Japan.
The effect was nothing short of galvanizing within the Japanese government and upon Japanese popular opinion. It may not be too much of an overstatement to assert that Pyongyang's launch was the single most important factor in Japan's decision, after many years of internal daliberations to into in the 1 is in TMD research.

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Second, it was China's missile launches in 1995 and 1996, however, turned the U.S. TMD program into a cause celebre within some circles in both Washington and Taipei.

Chinese interfoculture will argue intensely that Beiling's Taiwan Stratte exercises and their accompanying missile alunches in 1995 and 1996 were successful because both Taipei, Washington, and even Tokyo were finally made to understand how serious Beiging is about reunification with Taiwan and that China will brook no backsiding. In retrospect, measured against that criterion, they are correct. All concerned parties re-learned how serious China is about reunification. So Chinese arguments that their use of missiles was successful in 1995, likely enhanced popular support in Taiwan for Lee Teng-hui.

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U.S. TMD.

Belging opposition to TMD is long-standing, opin back quite a few years by now. But I suspect that China's core objections to the program are, at this point, mainly political and mainly tied to Taiwan.
It is probably true that future U.S. TMD programs have the potential to cause PLA planners to worry about the viability of their conventional missile forces; an operational concern. But it is no secret that it is faster and cheaper to build more missiles than to build and buy more TMD systems. In other words some China's objections seem to be political.

So what are China's political concerns about TMD? As the Chinese articulate them, there are four key concerns:

- First, TMD will be shared with other U.S. alles in the region and serve as the technological glue for an anti-China coalition.

- Second, that sharing TMD with Japan will take Tokyo down the road to a more active military role in the region.

- Third, transferring TMD to Taiwan will encourage Taipei to continue to resist coming to terms with Beijing.

- Fourth, selling additional TMD systems to Taiwan will provide the technological glue for an anti-China coalition.

- Fourth, selling additional TMD systems to Taiwan will provide the technological codine under which U.S. Taiwan military rooperation will be resurrected.

- Are there ments to these arguments or it this yet another case of 'seeing an accord but imagining the east tree?' Let's consider each concern briefly.

- Dieter than January U.S. Server Seoul has shown little interest. But the point is really that TMD as a system would

Sharing TMD with other U.S. allies in the region will serve as the technological quies for an ant-China condition.

Other than Japan, it is unclear to me at this point that any of Washington's allies in the region are seriously interested in acquiring systems that have yet to be proven effective or even deployed. So far even Seoul has shown little interest. But the point is really that TMD as a system would hardly/rive decisions that are really political in nature. Moreover, coalisions are usually not driven by technology but by shared political interests.

Second, that sharing TMD with Japan will take Tokyo down the road to a more active military role in the region. Wy thinking is that this is quite a lot to rest at the feet of TMD. Japan already has some lower-tier TMD systems. Would possessing upper-tier systems make a difference? Again, this is an open-ended question. Tokyo's future role in the region will surely rest upon Japanese domestic political decisions far greater than the hypothetical possession of new TMD systems.

Third, transferring TMD to Taiwan will encourage Taipe to continue to resist coming to terms with Beijing.

Without prejudice to the issue of whether or not being and Taipei can reach an accommodation transcends the questions of what offensive capabilities China can bring to bear or what defensive systems Taiwan can obtain to counter them.

Finally, selling TMD to Taiwan will provide the technological coded under which U.S. Fahavan military cooperation will be resurrected.

Certainly, to the extent that there have been calls in the U.S. reaching the transfer relationship creep" is a difficult proposition to accept. Clearly, a decision to revivily the defense relationship with Taiwan would engender serious policy questions about the basic U.S. stance toward China. It would likely intuite a serious debate in the U.S. and not be entered into cavalierly because one particular weapon system, defensive been calls in the U.S. recently different relationship.

To recapitate them, the key Chines

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To reactivate then, the key Chinese concerns shout TMD seem to be political, not operational. The most important political concerns review about Taiwan. And while some of these concerns speak to the realing of the "technically possible" none necessarily represent the "politically probable."

I would offer that that a good deal of the concern expressed by China about TMD in the Asis-Pacific region is as much about distrust of and uncertainty about U.S. strategic intentions as it is about the TMD systems themselves.

THE ISSUE OF FUTURE U.S. DEPLOYMENTS OF TMD SYSTEMS

The conference organizes; indicate that at the last session in Tokyo, which I did not attend, there was a great deal of discousion among participants as to whether perceived U.S. threats in Asia justify "importing" TMD systems into the region. Other issues that came up. I am told, included the relative importance of DPRK versus Chinese insists in these session in Tokyo, which I did not attend, there was a great deal of discousion among participants as to whether perceived U.S. threats in Asia justify "importing" TMD systems into the region. Other issues that came up. I am told, included the relative importance of DPRK versus Chinese insists in the region to which the U.S. sees TMD deployments to Asia may "signal" about U.S. regional intentions, especially toward China. I have been asked to comment on some of these issues and am happy the relative importance of DPRK versus Chinese insists in the region to which the U.S. sees TMD as the necessary response.

The first point to make is that the region to which the U.S. sees TMD as the necessary response.

The first point to make its that the U.S. has had TMD to deployed in the Asia Pacific for some time now. My understanding that the three have been balteries of Patriot missiles organic to U.S. Porces Korea for quite a couple of years; certainly since 1994 at the height of U.S. -DPRK tensions over North Korea's nuclear program. But I would argue that the deal three three three three three three three t

You may be disappointed to bear the argument that, in my view, it is highly unlikely that amy future U.S. deployment of TMD assets in the PACID Command's Area or Responsibility (AUN) would be a venue unature U.S. overnment would unose to use to square in tenters to sweet the properties of the proper

w, all of the discussion above has been focused on U.S. forces having TMD; not second parties. I have already mentioned that one of China's key concerns about TMD is in relation to Taiwan. So the question is, what would the hypothetical U.S. sale of mature TMD systems to Taiwa U.S. intentions toward China's control to the control of the question may also seem flippant but is not made to the properties of this intention to the control toward China's intention to be.

The properties of the discussion may also seem flippant but is not made to the properties of the site of the properties of the site of the properties of the discussion of the discussion of the discussion of the properties of the properties of the properties of the discussion of the properties of the properties of the discussion of

sents the personal analysis and opinion of the author only and should not be construed as the views of The CNA Corporation. This is an update to an earlier paper prepared for the Woodrow Wilson Center in October 2000

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